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The Fantasy Stories of George MacDonald

Raphael Shaberman

4 vols., paperback/ published by Lion Publishing, Tring, UK, 1981. (First published by W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1980) Printed in the USA. Black/white illustrations with coloured pictorial covers by Craig Yoe. £1.50 per vol, or £6.50 per set, boxed. The volumes are not numbered.

Contents:

(i) *The Light Princess and Other Stories*

“The Light Princess”; “The Giant’s Heart”; “The Carasoyne”; “Port in a Storm”; “Papa’s Story (A Scot’s Christmas Story).”

(ii) *The Golden Key and Other Stories*

“The Golden Key”; “The History of Photogen and Nycteris”; “The Shadows”; “The Gifts of the Child Christ.”

(iii) *The Wise Woman or The Lost Princess*

“The Wise Woman or The Lost Princess: A Double Story”; “Little Daylight”; “Cross Purposes”; “The Castle: a Parable.”

(iv) *The Grey Wolf*

“The Gray Wolf”; “The Cruel Painter”; “The Broken Swords”; “The Woe o’ Rivven (The Bell)”; “Uncle Cornelius, his Story”; “The Butcher’s Bills”; “Birth, Dreaming and Death.”

The “publisher’s note” (identical in each volume) tells us that this collection was edited by Glenn Edward Sadler. It is in fact a new edition of the collection, also edited by Glenn Sadler, published in 2 vols, by Eerdmans in 1973, and in the UK by Mowbray in 1974. In spite of the publisher’s claim, this is not “a complete edition of MacDonald’s shorter works.” However, for those who do not have these stories in any other form, their publication is most welcome.

More doubtful is the necessity for the present illustrations. In MacDonald’s lifetime, Arthur Hughes evoked the spirit of his stories as perfectly as did John Tenniel in relation to the *Alice* books of MacDonald’s friend Lewis Carroll. The drawings of Hughes combined a strength of design with a mystical quality that no subsequent illustrator has captured, though Maurice Sendak comes near to it in some of his illustrations to *The Golden Key*. The Hughes illustrations have been reproduced often in this century,

but poorly. Since 19th century editions are now scarce, dare we hope that some enterprising publisher will give us a first-rate reprinting of these superb illustrations? **[end of page 40]**